AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-15 (canceled).

Claim 16 (currently amended). A mold for vulcanizing a tire comprising axially opposite sidewalls and a tread band molded with a raised pattern formed with at least one circumferential groove, wherein the at least one circumferential groove of the tire tread band includes a tread stiffening means, said mold comprising:

a pair of axially opposite cheeks that correspond to the sidewalls of the tire; and

a matrix corresponding to the tread band interposed between said pair of axially opposite cheeks, said matrix including a plurality of ribs, which project in a raised configuration from a radial interior surface of the mold, for forming the raised pattern;

wherein a sectional profile of said radial interior surface comprises two concave side portions, each being defined by a respective center and a respective radius of curvature, ~~and~~

wherein ridges of the ribs in an area between the two concave side portions define a radially inwardly convex surface tangent,

wherein the at least one circumferential groove of the tire tread band corresponds to a central rib centered on an equatorial plane of the mold, and

wherein the central rib includes at least one circumferential depression, and wherein the tread stiffening means corresponds to the at least one circumferential depression of the central rib.

Claim 17 (previously presented). The mold of claim 16, wherein said concave side portions each have a radius of curvature ranging from about 150 mm to about 300 mm.

Claim 18 (previously presented). The mold of claim 16, wherein said convex surface tangent has a radius of curvature ranging from about 20 mm to about 150 mm.

Claim 19 (canceled).

Claim 20 (canceled).

Claim 21 (currently amended). The mold of claim 20 16, wherein a ratio of a height of the central rib, with respect to the radial interior surface, to a depth of the circumferential depression is included between 1.75 and 6.5.